

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

THE REAKIRT FORGERIES.

From the N. Y. Times.

In the romance of Monte Christo a striking picture is given of a man acquiring colossal wealth, and for a long series of years devoting himself, with its aid, to the ruin of those who had poisoned his youth. It more frequently happens in real life that man's ambition is directed to the restoration of family position once enjoyed, and, through ill-fortune, lost. The case of Reakirt, the Philadelphia forger, is an illustration of this.

The young man now accused of forgery was reared in the house, and in due course became a partner. He distinguished himself by close attention to business. His life was remarkable for decorum, economy, and abstemiousness. He studiously avoided bad associates, and was never known to visit haunts of vice, or even to frequent places of innocent pleasure. It appears certain, however, that for years he had contemplated villainy on a grand scale. The narrowing business of the house bore heavily on his mind. He resolved to restore its old position, and to this end he took the steps that have led him to ruin. About three months ago he prepared a note drawn by well-known firm, and payable to his own order. This he offered at a bank where he was in the habit of dealing, and where it was readily discounted. By this stroke the sum of \$5000 was placed in his hands. With this money he invested in a speculative purchase of Rock Island stock.

The criminal, however, escaped, and has not yet been apprehended. From the extraordinary skill shown by him in his nefarious operations, it may be doubted whether he will ever be taken. No fewer than thirteen banks in Philadelphia are said to have been swindled by him. Several of the persons whose signatures were forged, were literally amazed by the accuracy of the imitation, and one gentleman, in spite of the proof afforded by books, could hardly bring himself to deny a signature it was certain he never could have made. Reakirt at the moment of detection was possessed of large sums, and, but for this slip, it is said, his ambitious hopes might have been entirely realized. The case is a sad and instructive one. Had the culprit put forth the same skill and energy of purpose in the honest pursuit of his vocation, the ball would certainly in no long time have been at his feet. As it is, his hopes are blighted forever, and his miserable career furnished another memorable example of the foolishness of striving to accomplish good ends by wicked means.

"THE KEYSTONE STATE."

From the N. Y. World.

It seems that a controversy has sprung up in regard to the origin of this designation as applied to the State of Pennsylvania. In May last a gentleman in Pennsylvania, Mr. S. Hayden, published a communication in the Athens Gleaner, in which he assigned the origin of this phrase to the facts that at the close of the last century, when the public buildings were in progress in Washington, a part of the stone material that was not needed or was rejected was used to build a bridge over "Rock Creek," between Washington and Georgetown; that this bridge had an arch composed of thirteen stones, on the face of each of which the architect caused the name of initial of one of the thirteen States of the Union to be carved; that as he commenced in the usual order in which the States were always recited, according to their geographical positions, the name of Pennsylvania happened to be placed on the keystone, or middle stone, of the arch. Hence sprang a popular habit in that locality of speaking of Pennsylvania as "the Keystone State." This bridge, in the lapse of time, gave way to another, and the stones bearing the names or initials of the States disappeared. But the popular use of this phrase continued and spread all over the country. This account of its origin may well be received as correct, since it had the sanction of the late Colonel Peter Force, of Washington, who remembered the bridge, and who was a personally accurate and trustworthy antiquarian. It was he who gave this origin of the popular phrase to Mr. Hayden.

But this account did not suit the dignity of Pennsylvania. The Philadelphia Telegraph attacked it as absurd, and the rural papers of Pennsylvania echoed and indorsed the theory of the Telegraph, which is the following. The existence of the bridge, the arch with its thirteen stones, the names of the thirteen States engraved on them—one on each—Pennsylvania being on the keystone, are not denied. But it is claimed that the architect gave this place of honor to Pennsylvania to commemorate "an historical incident of great importance." This incident, important enough if true, was the "casting vote" given by the State of Pennsylvania, in the Congress of 1776, in favor of American independence! Considering the fact that the delegation of Pennsylvania were with this duty got to vote for independence at all, this

claim by some of their descendants that she by her "casting vote" decided the question, is—modest. Unhappily for this theory, there was no casting vote about the matter. There was no tie at any time, either when Richard Henry Lee's resolution was passed in committee of the whole, or when it was afterwards passed in the Congress. Although the journals do not record the votes, Mr. Jefferson, who combated his error about a matter in which he bore so great a part, and who wrote his autobiography in 1821, when he was no older than seventy-seven, has left a circumstantial account of the proceedings relating to independence, which explodes this modern Pennsylvania claim of a casting vote into utter nonentity.

Lee's famous resolution, "that these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent States," etc., was introduced in Congress on the 7th June, 76. But its consideration was postponed until the 1st of July, to give time to prepare some of the doubting colonies for so great a step. A committee, however, was appointed to prepare a Declaration of Independence. This document was reported by Mr. Jefferson on the 28th of June, and was then laid upon the table. Lee's resolution was taken up on the 1st of July in committee of the whole. It was debated the whole day in secret session, John Adams making a speech that is marked by a speech which Mr. Webster, from the scanty material of a letter written the next day by Mr. Adams to his wife, imitated with so much power of thought and expression that the supposititious speech passed for a long time as a report of the genuine oration. The vote was taken at the close of the day, and Mr. Jefferson says that the resolution received the votes of nine States, namely: New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia. South Carolina and Pennsylvania voted against it. Two only of the Delaware delegation were present, and as they were divided the vote of the State could not be cast. The delegation of New York had not then been authorized by her convention to vote upon the question either way. When the Committee of the Whole rose and reported the resolution to the House, Edward Rutledge, of South Carolina, moved a postponement to the next day (the 2d), in order to induce his colleagues to vote for it. On the 2d it was passed in Congress by the votes of twelve States, made up to that number by the additional votes of South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Mr. Jefferson's account of these last two votes is that a third member from Delaware had come post-express to vote for the resolution, and thus the vote of that State was cast for it; and he adds that "members of a different sentiment attending that morning from Pennsylvania their vote was changed, so that the whole twelve colonies were unanimously in favor of it at all their voices for it; and within a few days (July 9) the convention of New York approved of it, and thus supplied the void occasioned by the withdrawing of her delegates from the vote." It is thus apparent that whether the vote of Pennsylvania was changed by a single member of her delegation, or, as Mr. Jefferson intimates, by more than one, there never was a moment in the whole proceeding when the resolution needed the casting vote of that or any other State. If there is any important historical incident to be symbolized in the completion of an arch through the addition of a keystone, it would seem that the accession of New York to the measure is that incident. But we lay no claim to this position for New York, because we are satisfied that the phrase "the Keystone State" had its origin in the accidental formation of that bridge over "Rock Creek," and that the position of Pennsylvania as the keystone was equally the fortuitous position of the State in the order of enumeration common at that time, with six States on one side of it and six on the other.

ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

From the London Saturday Review.

General Schenck, who is expected in England a few days hence, may be supposed to enjoy the confidence of the President and the Secretary of State. He will probably be careful to avoid the mysterious errors of manner which have caused the dismissal of Mr. Morey, and will not be held responsible for the misdeeds of Mr. Sumner or any other Senator. After the repudiation by the Senate of Mr. Reverdy Johnson's treaty, it was announced that the negotiation was only to be renewed at Washington; but it seems that General Schenck is empowered to make some kind of overture to the English Government. If he repeats the complaints which have been founded by General Grant and Mr. Fish on the unfriendly spirit attributed to England during the civil war, Lord Granville might perhaps ask him in return for his opinion on the recent vote of the House of Representatives. It would be scarcely courteous to add that a still more shameless act of rudeness was never perpetrated by a deliberative assembly. On the motion of General Butler, the House has resolved, by a majority of 172 to 21, that a welcome shall be offered to O'Donovan Rossa and the other discharged Fenian convicts. When General Butler lately proposed at Boston that a series of insults should be offered to England for the sake of reuniting the Republican party, a few respectable American writers and speakers protested against the proposal, and declared that General Butler had no pretension to represent public opinion. The effusive advocates of the United States in England eagerly accepted the assurance; and the expression of a doubt whether the lowest American demagogue is not the most popular of political leaders was not ungenerally denounced as an insult and indiscreet. Nevertheless it was known that General Butler had been twice elected by a district in Massachusetts, and soon afterwards the President reproduced in his message to Congress several of the arguments and suggestions which had been applauded at Boston. It now appears that the House of Representatives, at the instigation of General Butler, almost unanimously agrees to offer a gross and wanton affront to the English Government and nation. The Democrats have united with the Republicans in the approval of rebellion against the English Government as an act intrinsically meritorious. It is not necessary that the English political enterprise, or that the ringleaders should have a reasonable prospect of success. The convicts are offenders against English law; and therefore at Washington they are heroes and martyrs. Two of the three members of the Federal Government have now displayed bitter hostility to England. It remains to be seen whether the Senate concurs in the litigious carping of the President, and in the ill-bred malignity of the House of Representatives. Unluckily the majority of the body consists of the partisans of General Grant and the followers of Mr. Sumner. The self-respect of the Senate will secure it from the degradation incurred by the House; but the President of the Senate, when he was Speaker of the House of Representatives, invited the Fenian leaders to take places on the floor. There has been no civil war in the United Kingdom, nor were the Fenian conspirators supported by any constituted body or by any respectable section of the community. When the Southern States seceded from the Union they carried with them the whole machinery of government, as well as the titular sovereignty which they had retained for themselves when they first entered the Union. Their right to secede was acknowledged by nearly all American statesmen and jurists, and it was scarcely disputed by the President himself. Nearly all the army and navy officers of Southern origin thought it their duty to hold their State allegiance paramount, although many of them disapproved of the policy of secession. The Confederate Government raised great armies, and for two years maintained superiority in the field; and carrying that into the hands of the Union deemed it possible to reclaim the Southern States by force. From the beginning of the war to the end both houses of the English Parliament steadily disapproved the passage of any resolution, and even the delivery of any speech, which might be unacceptable to the United States. It was impossible wholly to silence the expression of the sympathies of private members, but the leaders of parties succeeded in preventing, not only an obnoxious vote, but a formal discussion of the merits of the belligerents. The courtesy and caution which are nurtured by traditions of political responsibility are met with little appreciation, but not even the Shermans or the Butlers have been able to discharge a grievance in the Parliamentary proceedings of four years. In the early part of the war, when a foolish naval officer had committed an outrage on the English flag, the lower house of Congress hastened to pass a vote of thanks for an act which the Secretary of State was soon afterwards compelled to disavow. It is not surprising that such a body should be regarded by intelligent Americans with merited disrespect, but the House of Representatives, elected by universal suffrage, and, notwithstanding the difference of the people to the qualifications of the members for a share in the government of the country, the House must be supposed to express the opinions of the constituencies. Unless General Schenck is authorized to express on the part of the President entire dissent from the measure adopted by the House of Representatives, it

question need not to have this morbid horror of the "British aristocracy." There was a time when he seemed rather to court than fear it. But, at any rate, it is absurd to talk as if the whole country could not supply sense enough to take care of its own interests. The commission is to meet at Washington, and the commissioners on our side may be trusted to do justice to the case with which they have to deal. The opposition thus far displayed is of the most paltry, not to say the most disgraceful, character. We are all to tremble in our shoes because a few Englishmen are coming over here to confer with commissioners appointed by our own Government upon international differences. "Beware of them," cries a Senator, "they are sure to be too smart for us." We think rather of Judge Nelson and his colleagues. It is, however, important that people should understand that a very bitter feeling is entertained toward the commission by anti-American Republicans. The commission has not yet met, and consequently fault cannot be found with anything it has done. But it seems to be thought a proper game to discredit it beforehand, and to impugn the motives of each government in agreeing to it. It is for the nation to decide whether the commission shall have a fair chance or not. If not, why let it meet at all? If then the "British aristocracy" who inspired the Washington letter from which we have quoted, will do well to content himself with the publicity he has already secured for his opinions.

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seems a waste of time to discuss the means of removing existing differences. An alliance with Fenian convicts is utterly inconsistent with any scheme for establishing friendly relations between England and the United States. The systematic deference which has been displayed by English ministers to American susceptibilities is evidently misinterpreted. It would be better to apply the same balance or standard to the conduct of both Governments. When a strict account is demanded of the alleged negligence shown in the matter of the Alabama, it would be well to inquire whether the American Government has been blameless in permitting two invasions of Canada by forces organized in its territory with full knowledge on the part of the Federal and State authorities. Some sacrifice of feeling might be made for the sake of peace and goodwill; but it is not worth while to make concessions which will be followed by the spiteful civilities tendered by Congress to O'Donovan Rossa. As long as the President and the House acknowledge General Butler for their guide and leader no settlement of disputes is possible. The arrangement of the Alabama claims would be immediately succeeded by demands for a share in the Canadian fisheries or in the navigation of the St. Lawrence. The characteristic lawlessness of American diplomacy may be explained by the influence of political leaders of the stamp of General Butler. His more decent countrymen are ashamed of the power which he exercises; but universal suffrage cares little for the scruples of respectability. At present General Butler seems to be the most prominent politician in the United States, and when he is most recklessly in the wrong he is most implicitly followed by the popular branch of the Legislature. If Mr. Beesly at any time leads a House of Commons consisting mainly of Odgers and Bradlaughs, he will perhaps pass resolutions as offensive to foreign powers as the late vote of the House of Representatives.

Notwithstanding the menacing language of the President and the bluster of his confidential adviser, the Government of the United States has no immediate intention of making war upon England. The only possible enterprise which could be attempted would be the invasion of Canada, and probably even American opinion would disapprove of a servile imitation of the proceedings of Gramont and Le Bonf. There is no standing army available for the purpose, and the country is not prepared, in the entire absence of a pretext for war, to raise a great force of volunteers for a profligate act of aggression. If the President really intends to act on the suggestions of General Butler, it would be idle to attempt to deter him from the scheme by any effort at conciliation. If the conflict is forced upon England, it would not be terminated without serious injury to the aggressor. It is well that General Butler and General Grant have committed the blunder of fastening a quarrel on the Canadians, instead of confining their provocations to the Imperial Government. The conquest of the Dominion would not be easy; and if General Butler were to lead a contingent to Ireland he might find it difficult to return.

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Receipts of Premiums, 70,000,000

Interests from Investments, 150,000

Losses paid in 1870. \$1,186,941

STATEMENT OF THE ASSETS.

Table listing assets: First Mortgages on Philadelphia City Property, United States Government Loans, Pennsylvania State Loans, Philadelphia City Loans, New Jersey and other State Loans and City Bonds, Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Co., other Railroad Mortgage Bonds and Loans, Philadelphia City Loans, Cash in Bank, Loans on Collateral Security, Notes receivable and Marine Premiums unsecured, Accrued Interest and Premium in course of transmission, Real estate, Office of the Company.

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1829. CHARTER PERPETUAL 1871.

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INCOME FOR 1871, \$1,900,000

LOSSES PAID IN 1870, \$174,851.70

Losses Paid Since 1829 Nearly \$6,000,000

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November 1, 1870.

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\$500,000 State of Pennsylvania Six Per Cent Loans 214,000 00

\$500,000 City of Philadelphia Six Per Cent Loans (except from Bank Tax) 204,162 50